

Statement of Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
In support of H.R. 2719, the “Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act”

December 3, 2013

I rise in support of H.R. 2719, the “Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act.” For years, as both Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, I have been troubled about the way TSA goes about acquiring technology.

Time and again, we have seen taxpayer dollars wasted on technologies that either do not work or cannot be upgraded to meet the agency’s needs. I have also been trouble by TSA’s apparent inability to effectively manage its inventory of security-related technology and meet its goals for contracting with small and disadvantaged businesses.

The bill before us today addresses these concerns through greater transparency and accountability. In this age of sequestration, TSA cannot purchase technologies on a whim and outside of robust acquisitions controls.

Under H.R. 2719, of which I was proud to be an original cosponsor, TSA will be required to develop and publish a multi-year technology investment plan that will guide the agency’s security-related technology purchases. This plan will give both the agency and Congress a clear understanding of how taxpayer dollars will be allocated in future years.

The bill also requires TSA to develop a plan for managing its inventory of security-related technology. Earlier this year, the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General found that TSA had more than 17,000 items in its warehouse inventory, at an estimated cost of \$185 million. The IG concluded that TSA may be able to put approximately \$800,000 per year to better use by managing its inventory more effectively.

For fiscal year 2012, TSA’s goal for prime contracting with small businesses was set at 23 percent, yet the agency barely reached 16 percent. To address TSA’s chronic problems meeting small business contracting goals, the bill also requires TSA to consult with other Federal agencies that get small business contracting done *and done right*.

Under H.R. 2719, TSA will be required to develop an action plan for improving its performance and report to Congress on its progress in implementing the plan. For too long, TSA has relied upon the same limited number of companies to develop and produce the security-related technologies it puts into the field.

Doing so comes at the peril of small and minority-owned businesses that are essential to innovation. This dynamic also results in additional costs to taxpayers due to a lack of competition in the marketplace.

H.R. 2719 received the unanimous support of the Committee on Homeland Security in October.

The bill also received the support of the Members of the Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation Security as it moved through the regular order earlier this year. I look forward to the bill receiving the support of the Full House today.

With that, I would like to thank Subcommittee Chairman Hudson and Ranking Member Richmond for working in collaboration to develop and see this legislation to the House floor. I urge support for the bill.